

1<sup>st</sup> (1)  
AN  
ACCOUNT

Of the Late Dreadful  
Earth-Quake

In the ISLAND of  
MEVIS, St. CHRISTOPHERS, &c.

Which happen'd in the Beginning of April, of this present Year 1690.

In a LETTER to a Friend in London.

S I R,

24 June 1690

THE Interest which you have in the Trade of this Island, obliges me to give you some Account of the Earth-Quake that happened in this Place. It was very astonishing and terrible while it lasted; but as for what Mischief it has done, we cannot for the present give a just Account of it, and therefore must leave it imperfect till the next. However, you may be sure it was very great, by the wastful Destruction of Buildings, which it has made: And it was one of our chiefest Happinellies that the Fort and Magazine escap'd.

It began upon the sixth of April, about five of the Clock in the Afternoon. At what time we heard a rumbling Noise, like that of distant Thunder, which seem'd to come from the Bowels of the great Mountain, seated in the very Navil of the Island. We heard it for a short while with great Amazement; for it lasted not long before we felt the dire Effects of those violent Vapors struggling and contending in the Womb of the Earth for passage forth. So strong was the Motion, that within some few Moments after the Noise began, ensu'd a most amazing Earth-Quake, which shook the whole Island to that degree, that all the Houses in Charles Town that were built of Brick or Stone, dropt of a sudden down from the Top to the Bottom in perfect Ruines. Those that were built of Wood were no less violently shaken, but stood however; which shew'd that the Rivetings of wooden Structures are far stronger, and not so easily disjoynted as the Co-agmentations of Cement and Mortar. Nevertheless, it was a dreadful thing to see Men, Women and Children flying up and down from Place to Place in Fear and Consternation, yet not knowing where to fly for Safety, while the Surface of the tottering Earth hardly gave them Liberty, no less in an Agony than the Earth it self, to set their Feet upon the Ground: which in many places also open'd, and from the yawning Clefts, vomited up a sort of hot, bituminous Water, whole Tuns full at a time, no less offensive to the Smell, than dreadful to the Sight: and such was the Force which thrust up that heavy Element, as to



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mount it a great height in the Air. The Sea it self for a time forsook the Shoar for about three quarters of a Mile together, and left a great Number of Fish of a large Size to lye gaping upon the Sand, till it return'd again: which violent Motion of the Water happen'd diverse times, though not with the same Rapidity and Fury, nor at so great a Distance as at first.

Another thing was observable, that whereas it is an usual thing in this Island, for every House to have a large Cistern, nine or ten Foot deep, and fifteen or twenty Foot in Diameter, for the Conveniency of receiving the Rain-water, the Violence of the Earth-quake all over the Island was such, that those Cisterns threw up the Water eight or ten foot high in the Air, as if it had been spouted out of so many monstrous Springs. The Earth also in many places was thrown up in vast Heaps; and great Numbers of large Trees were torn up by the Roots, and buried in the Rents and Gapings of the Island, and never expected to be seen more. I wish we may have a true Sence of this terrible Judgment of God upon us.

Nor has this Island only felt the severe Strokes of Celestial Indignation. For as we are told by several Persons, since come from thence to this Island, *St. Christopher* has had a large Share of the same Calamity; where a late Earth-quake, no less dreadful, has made the same Ravages, by throwing down and burying whole Houses in the wide Fissures of the gaping Mold, overturning their Sugar-Mills, and demolishing the *Jesuits* Colledge, together with several other Piles of Brick and Stone, to the great Amazement of all that beheld it, and no less Damage of them that suffer'd. We are also inform'd that *Antego* and *Monserat* have likewise been very greatly shaken, though not in so severe a manner; and that the *Barbadoes* also has had some trembling Fits, but not so considerable. As for our parts, we are not quite rid of all our Fears, for this Island has had several short Agonies since, that have not long endur'd, which is all we have to make us hope that the Fury of the Cause is over, and that the Effects will consequently cease.

After we had somewhat recover'd our selves, I began to consider what might be the Cause of this dreadful Accident: and by my little Reading, I find the great Philosophers cannot agree concerning the true Cause of Earth-quakes. For some will have Wind, some Water to be the Cause of them, when put up within the Bowels of the Earth, like strong Liquor fermenting in a Bottle, and not able to get forth, otherwise, than breaking the Glass. For my Part, I believe both Wind and Water concur'd in this which we have suffer'd. But I shall not trouble you with my Philosophy, you being in a Place where you may have recourse to the more Learned, for better Satisfaction than I can pretend to give you. This is certain, we have severely felt the fatal Consequences of these Contentions within the Bowels of the Earth; and this being over, I hope I shall have no more occasion to trouble you with these sad Relations.

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